



BODY PIERCING AND THE RE-EMBODIMENT OF COMMODITY-BASED IDENTITY

Commodity-based identity is a significant part of today's consumer culture society. Some scholars view this reliance on commodities as limiting the power of the individual. However, this study focuses on the activity of body piercing to argue that individuals exercise authority as they utilize commodities to create bodily-centered identity. In the community of college-age individuals, body piercing has emerged as an important commodity used to express personal and communal identity. This project draws upon first-hand ethnographic research and existing theoretical analysis in Anthropology and other Social Science disciplines to argue that body piercing represents the re-embodiment of commodity-based identity.

In this study, the practice of body piercing in the college-age community is analyzed in relation to traditional rites of passage with which it shares undeniable similarities. When children become distanced from their parents, as in the case of 'going away to college,' they enter a new stage in life; they may then undergo a crisis of identity when the structure on which they based their identity, their family unit, is replaced by a community of their peers. This crisis often occurs in conjunction with the crisis of bodily detachment which arises in part from the practice of commodity-based identity. However, in this case, body piercing as a form of commodity-based identity intercedes as a way to reconcile these crises of identity and claim, or reclaim, bodily-centered identity through the activity of body piercing.

AMELIA GUIMARIN

University of California Irvine

BLOG: <http://criticallycultural.blogspot.com>

EMAIL: aguimarin@gmail.com

CELL: 949-275-4498

